



## 6 key requirements for a profitable **NOC + Help Desk service**

How to improve your scalability and profitability  
with an outsourced NOC and Help Desk solution

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Whatever your device, we've got you covered.

## Read this paper to discover:

- Why outsourcing rather than internalizing a NOC + Help Desk is your best strategy
- The distinction between NOC and Help Desk activities
- Six key success factors for an outsourced solution that cuts mustard
- How AVG can support you now

## How the world's most successful MSPs maximize profitability

The productivity improvements realized from adding a remote monitoring and management (RMM) platform to a managed service provider's (MSP's) business is well known. A single technician providing manual support without an RMM tool, and no automation or remote access, can manage about 125 end user devices at most.

In AVG's experience, add a RMM platform with automation and that same technician can manage upwards of 250 devices.

Now add a NOC (network operating center) + Help Desk function to that same automated RMM platform and the net number of end points managed by a single technician jumps to about 325 devices or more.<sup>1</sup>

While the impact of NOC + Help Desk on an MSP's productivity is less well known, it is nonetheless a key to scalability. The number of devices under your management increases. Your technician headcount remains the same. This is how the world's most successful MSPs maximize their profitability.

If you are a MSP or a tech savvy company considering the move into managed services, a well-oiled, process driven NOC + Help Desk function will be mandatory. NOC + Help Desk are how you meet the most stringent customer service level agreements and take on larger contracts with the same number of technicians – or less.

A critical decision every MSP faces is whether to internalize their NOC + Help Desk or to outsource this to a trusted partner. The premise of this paper is that building an internal capability is both time consuming, expensive, and fraught with risks. As such, outsourcing in all but the most exceptional of circumstances is likely to be a more cost effective strategy.

However, whether you build this capability yourself or outsource, there are 'key success factors' that any NOC + Help Desk capability must satisfy. Think of this as a litmus test for assessing your options, and ensuring this critical part of your managed services business meets your specific needs – while delivering exceptional customer value with maximum profitability.

<sup>1</sup> Statistics on end user devices under management are based on AVG's experience delivering business enablement programs to global Partners.

## Build it yourself or outsource?

Whether you are MSP or considering adding managed services to your core business, you really have two options for providing these critical supplemental services:

- **Build your own internal NOC + Help Desk capabilities**
- **Work with a RMM solution provider who provides complete transition support and the flexibility to adopt managed services at your own pace**

While you may have the technical know how to build your own NOC + Help Desk, doing so will be a very time consuming and expensive proposition. Organizations that attempt this risk higher client turnover because they are making the investment and you are „trying to figure it out as you go along“.

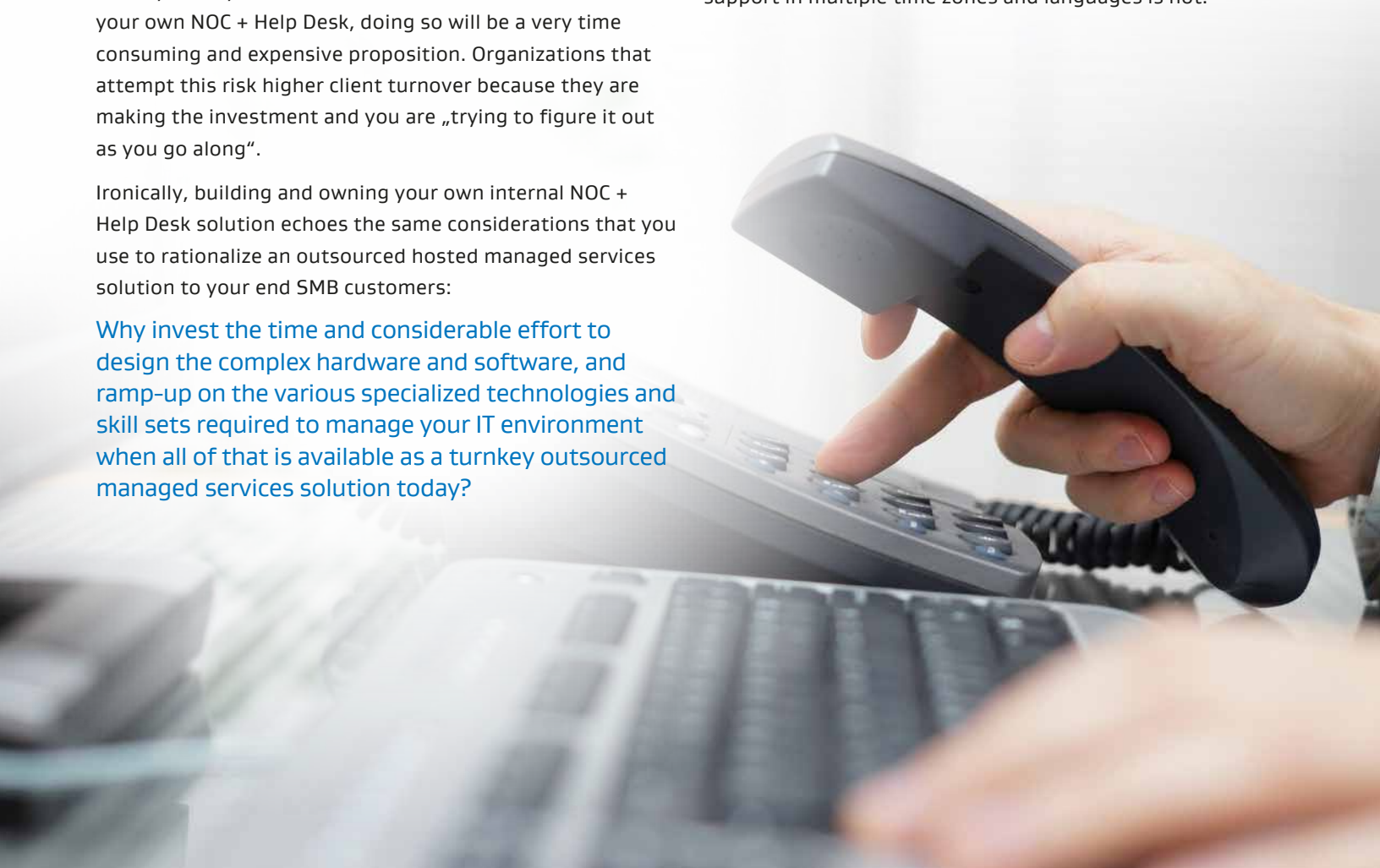
Ironically, building and owning your own internal NOC + Help Desk solution echoes the same considerations that you use to rationalize an outsourced hosted managed services solution to your end SMB customers:

**Why invest the time and considerable effort to design the complex hardware and software, and ramp-up on the various specialized technologies and skill sets required to manage your IT environment when all of that is available as a turnkey outsourced managed services solution today?**

### **It's the same storyline with NOC + Help Desk.**

Why would you choose to invest the time and effort to provision those services directly when you can have a partner whose core business is providing those capabilities?

Providing valuable technology solutions and skilled resources to customers is your core business and focus; building a NOC + Help Desk capability with round the clock support in multiple time zones and languages is not.



## NOC + Help Desk – what are you outsourcing?

An outsourced solution removes the burden of providing NOC + Help Desk support as a way to optimize your scalability and profitability. What exactly are you outsourcing?

NOC is really about ensuring the ongoing, optimal performance and stability of your customers' IT infrastructure – the servers, workstations, switches, routers and other critical equipment. For the most part, a NOC function is working quietly in the background to

troubleshoot, diagnose, and remediate. When there is a problem, you or your technicians get a call.

In contrast, help desk is client facing and provides the first line of support for dealing with end-user questions. Typical issues include user password reset, printer problems, software needs to be updated, someone is locked out of their documents, a computer is frozen, and many other niggly issues.

## Key Success Factors for Your NOC + Help Desk

To cut mustard, an outsourced NOC + Help Desk solution needs to satisfy the following key success factors:

- 1. Support not supplant your MSP business**
- 2. Extend your brand to the end client environment**
- 3. Scale to take advantage of larger contracts**
- 4. Streamline staff and shrink payroll levels (for improved profitability)**
- 5. Meet SLAs as a way to ensure customer satisfaction**
- 6. Eliminate dependency on senior technical resources (and the cost of staying up on fast changing technology)**





## KEY SUCCESS FACTOR #1: SUPPORT NOT SUPPLANT YOUR MSP BUSINESS

The distinction between supporting and not supplanting is critical. In AVG's experience with the provision of NOC services to our global Partners, in roughly 20 percent of the cases the issue must be escalated back to the MSP for resolution. That means NOC services are complimentary to what you provide to end customers and not a substitute for those services.

There is an important caveat to this key success. What you want in an outsourced solution that supports, rather than supplanting your MSP business is a triage function. In other words, you want any problems that are escalated to your attention to be pre-diagnosed. You want to know what the problem is – and exactly what your team needs to do to resolve it quickly and efficiently.

## KEY SUCCESS FACTOR #2: EXTEND YOUR BRAND TO THE END CLIENT ENVIRONMENT

An outsourced NOC + Help Desk solution must seamlessly represent your business' brand to your end customers. This is a more important consideration for help desk support: you never want your customers to pause and wonder who they are talking to. The explicit need and goal is to create the impression that your end customers are only dealing directly with your business.

This tactic is called 'white labeling' and for all intents and purposes, your NOC + Help Desk solution partner has no identity

or visibility where customers are concerned. Your brand is seamlessly represented through all interactions including:

- **Web-based client chat sessions** where your name and logo appear to the client
- **Support Assistant** – with a system tray branded with your logo
- **Outbound client phone calls** – greeted with your business name

## KEY SUCCESS FACTOR #3: SCALE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF LARGER CONTRACTS

By offsetting the performance and availability of your customers' infrastructure your technicians are freed from those day to day support issues. They are able to focus on more profitable or higher value project work such as remapping a domain strategy for a customer rather than

a password reset or a printer cartridge that needs replacing. Moreover, you can confidently take on larger projects, with more devices under management, without growing the headcount of your team.

## KEY SUCCESS FACTOR #4: STREAMLINE STAFF AND SHRINK PAYROLL LEVELS (for improved profitability)

Scalability and profitability go hand in hand. Profitability is achieved when more devices are under management with the same or fewer technical support resources. The most expensive way to scale is to simply add more internal IT resources. This is not usually the path to greater or maximum profitability.

A senior internal IT resource will probably cost you – for round figures – between \$ 65 K and \$ 80 K per year. With an outsourced NOC + Help Desk function you are supplanting that resource with a flat rate \$ 18 per-user per-month.<sup>2</sup>

This doesn't necessarily mean you wouldn't need a senior tech resource: simply that you may need fewer high skilled resources or these resources aren't squandered on low level

issues that are more cost effectively addressed through a flat fee per-user NOC + Help Desk Partner.

Another consideration is the real headcount that is required to staff a viable NOC + Help Desk. Many MSPs think all they need to provide 24x7 service coverage is three people. According to Erlang traffic calculators, developed by Westbay Engineers Ltd<sup>3</sup>, in point of fact, you actually need five people – because you will have to anticipate and plan for sickness, vacation, and sundry things like washroom breaks.

<sup>2</sup> Cost per-user per-month is for illustrative purposes only and based on AVG's experience and cost structure. Costs may vary depending on solution provider and contractual details.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.erlang.com/calculator/>

## PREDICTING CALL VOLUME: THE 30 PERCENT 'RULE'

In AVG's experience, for every 100 help desk endpoints under management, roughly 30 percent of those users will call every month. This is a reliable, experienced-based stat that we use to anticipate staffing/ resourcing levels for a reliable NOC + Help Desk support service.



## KEY SUCCESS FACTOR #5: MEET SLAs AS A WAY TO ENSURE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Chances are you are meeting your customer service level agreements today. What happens if you add a few hundred or several thousand new devices? Will you be able to ensure customer satisfaction and SLAs? This is the beginning of a slippery slope for many MSPs; and the high cost of customer churn is just around the corner when SLAs start to slip.

The right outsourced NOC+ Help Desk solution Partner enables you to extend your service indefinitely and secure those bigger deals that you might not be able to bid on today – without adding headcount.

Another critical aspect of this key success factor is the high cost of frontloading the resources and expertise you need to provide the customer support and SLAs that come with larger contracts. Many MSPs make the mistake of hiring the resources they need in anticipation of winning bigger contracts. In some instances, the additional resources – equipment and headcount – forces a move to a larger facility

This represents a huge and often catastrophic financial liability; because these resources are on their books. Bigger contracts often have longer sales cycles. Sometimes they don't come at all and the MSP is on the hook for the expense(s).

## KEY BENEFITS OF AN OUTSOURCED NOC + HELP DESK SOLUTION

- Free up valuable IT resources to work on higher value tasks/services
- Eliminate the reactive, unpredictable part of your business
- Streamline staff levels/shrink payroll levels
- Scale very rapidly to take advantage of bigger contracts/RFPs
- Compete effectively for contracts that require help desk support in multiple languages
- Efficiently provide specialized services to take advantage of market opportunities
- Predictable cost structure every month
- Fast answers to end clients' questions
- 24x7 monitoring and remediations

## KEY SUCCESS FACTOR #6: ELIMINATE DEPENDENCY ON SENIOR TECHNICAL RESOURCES (and the cost of staying-up on fast changing technology)

The more dependent your managed services business is on senior technology expertise the more vulnerable you are. Let's say you have a Cisco Certified Internetwork Expert on staff to provide routing and switching services to end customer networks. What happens if that expert leaves to join another MSP or set up their own business practice? You're left scrambling. You have a number of clients with Cisco hardware and no Cisco expert. This is one small example.

The fact is, as an MSP, you face a daunting and ever changing universe of technologies. If a desired client has a Lennox environment, and you are supporting an internal NOC + Help Desk service, you'll need a Lennox

expert. It's that simple. And it doesn't take long before you are suddenly dependent on a stable of senior technical resources to run your business. It also means absorbing the non-trivial cost of keeping these experts up-to-date on these constantly evolving technologies.

An outsourced NOC + Help Desk Partner obviates this problem by giving your business and end customers immediate and ongoing access to a broad range of educational backgrounds and technology experts. Simply put, someone else is footing the bill for keeping these resources up to speed: you pay a predictable monthly cost while benefiting from guaranteed services.





## Summary

The key to scaling your business and optimizing profits is the ability to grow without adding headcount. NOC + Help Desk services are an essential part of your business strategy for achieving both.

Internalizing and maintaining your own NOC + Help Desk is an expensive proposition. In many cases you must front end the cost of bringing on board the service and technical staff you need to provision services 24x7. You also face the ongoing cost of replacing experts when they leave and keeping up to date with ever new and rapidly changing technologies.

Outsourcing your NOC + Help Desk to the right solution Partner is a more cost effective solution. Key success factors for assessing a potential outsourced solution include, but are not limited to:

- 1. Supporting not supplanting your MSP business.**
- 2. Extending your brand to the end client environment.**
- 3. Enabling you to scale to take advantage of larger contracts.**
- 4. Helping you streamline staff and shrink payroll levels (for improved profitability).**
- 5. Meeting SLAs as a way to ensure customer satisfaction.**
- 6. Eliminating your dependency on senior technical resources (and the cost of staying up on fast changing technology).**

## THE AVG ADVANTAGE

AVG provides an optional and complete turnkey NOC + Helpdesk service to partners using the AVG Managed Workplace platform. Services are provided 24x7 from our North American based operation for any network, device, application or technology covered by AVG Managed Workplace.

AVG's NOC is an increasingly popular service for partners seeking round-the-clock assistance with the monitoring of RMM dashboards, error reporting and simple remediation. Our helpdesk service is a resource that partners draw upon

as first line support for customers when they call in to report an incident and need a rapid response.

These services offer AVG partners with an affordable way to outsource basic helpdesk or professional IT services support without the risk or responsibility of hiring additional in-house staff before their business is ready to sustain them.

AVG NOC + Help Desk services have a proven track record for helping our partners focus on winning more business and achieving profitable growth.

There's never been a better time  
to talk about managed services.

**If you like what you see, let's talk!**

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